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Governor O'Malley Convenes 2nd Annual Conference On Combating Human Trafficking in Maryland

More than 400 representatives of local, state and national organizations today gathered for the 2nd Annual Conference on Combating Human Trafficking in Maryland. Governor Martin O'Malley opened the conference, reviewing work already done to fight human trafficking in the state, and outlining continued efforts to battle this crime.

"The most sacred duty of any government is to promote the safety of our people," said Governor O'Malley. "Working together with all of our partners in law enforcement, we've assembled quite a collection of public servants and leaders in the fight against human trafficking. If we make better choices about how to use and share data, pass stronger laws to go after traffickers and continue to be proactive in our law enforcement efforts and victim outreach, we will get better results for our most vulnerable people." The 400 participants include law enforcement investigators, criminal justice professionals, human service providers, and human trafficking survivors. Among the topics they will be discussing in workshops throughout the day are first responder and victim interaction, gang involvement, pimp culture, law enforcement response, and advanced treatment and services.

Highlighting the importance of the state effort, the conference will be attended by six high-ranking state officials. The list includes: Sam Abed, Secretary of the Department Juvenile Services; Dr. Gayle Jordan, Randolph, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Health & Mental Hygiene; Gary Maynard, Secretary of the Department of Public Safety & Correctional Services; Ted Dallas, Secretary of the Department of Human Resources; and Colonel Marcus Brown, Superintendent of the Maryland State Police. Dr. Lillian Lowery, State Superintendent of Schools and Rod Rosenstein, the U.S. Attorney for Maryland will also take part. Rosenstein will extend opening remarks.

This conference is a partnership of the Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention, the Human Trafficking Task Force, TurnAround, Inc., Maryland Association of Resources for Families & Youth, Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault, and Araminta Freedom Initiative. All of the government and private sector partners involved in this effort have worked closely together to combat human trafficking, and in the past year have made significant accomplishments. Among them:

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There has been expanded law enforcement activities and victim outreach services. For example, using internet “escort” websites, the Maryland State Police Child Recovery Unit child trafficking operation has pro-actively identified and helped 17 child victims in the first five months of 2013. In 2012, they served 76 victims.

1,097 juvenile caseworkers statewide have been trained in Child Victim Identification and Risk Assessment. The Department of Juvenile Services has deployed its risk assessment tool at two female detention facilities. Full implementation of the screening tool at all Juvenile Services intake offices in the community and facilities will begin on June 1, 2013.

The Maryland Department of Human Resources is ensuring that child victims are treated as child neglect cases and that the children receive appropriate placement and care. The Department of Human Resources will integrate screening questions for trafficking within its national model screening tool beginning July 2013.

Maryland’s Mental Hygiene Administration is working to provide uninsured victims with mental health and addictions treatment. They are assisting nonprofit providers in obtaining critical vital records documents for victims at no cost.

A Human Trafficking Intelligence Manager has been hired to develop data-driven intelligence and been assigned to the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center. The Manager collects, analyzes, and disseminates data statewide, while working to improve communications to resolve confusion or contradiction among various agencies.

All of these activities have been bolstered by an aggressive and comprehensive law enforcement effort designed to rescue survivors and prosecute the traffickers. Law enforcement officers are targeting those sites where rampant exploitation occurs, ranging from truck stops to hotel rooms. Officers are on the streets searching for child victims. Authorities statewide are using technology such as license plate recognition from the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center to track vehicles used by traffickers, and to rescue their victims.

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